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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 27 September 1990, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. de MARCO (Malta)

- Address by Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives
- Address by Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, President of the Republic of Nicaragua
- Address by Mr. Hussain Muhammad Ershad, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
- Address by His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait
- General debate [9] (continued)

  Statements made by

  Mr. Abu Hassan (Malaysia)
  Mr. Bongo (Gabon)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

ADDRESS BY MR. MAUMOON ABDUL GAYOOM, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President GAYOOM: I have much pleasure in extending to you, Sir, my warm congratulations and those of the members of the Maldives delegation on your election as President of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that under your able guidance the deliberations of this session will be concluded in a successful manner. I should also like to convey our sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Major-General Joseph Garba, for having done an excellent job in presiding over the Assembly during the past year. I note here with particular pleasure the significance of his visit to the Maldives earlier this year in spite of his very busy schedule.

I wish to express my country's deep appreciation also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his dedicated efforts to uphold the noble objectives of the United Nations. We wish him well in all his endeavours.

On behalf of the Maldives, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the admission of Namibia to the United Nations, which it truly deserves after its long and hard-fought battle for independence. We are confident that independent Namibia will make a most positive contribution to the work of the Organization. I should also like to welcome our newest Member, the Principality of Liechtenstein, and

(President Gayoom)

congratulate it on having gained the sovereign independent status it enjoys today.

This year the Maldives is celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the attainment of full political independence. I do not, therefore, consider it irrelevant ot reflect a little on the achievements we have been able to make during the past 25 years. From the day we became an independent nation, we embarked on a determined path to overcome the triple menace of poverty, illiteracy and disease. With genuine hard work in the face of tremendous odds, the Maldives has been able to register significant strides in social and economic development. In education, we have now achieved a literacy level of over 95 per cent, and more than 80 per cent of our young children have access to schools. The improved standard of health is illustrated by the remarkable drop in the infant mortality rate from 120 per thousand live births in 1977 to 43 per thousand in 1989 and the rise in the average life expectancy from 46.5 years in 1977 to 64 years in 1988. Economically, too, we have made very good progress. With planned investment in the important sectors of fisheries, tourism, transportation and telecommunications, our per capita income has become more than six times that of pre-independence levels, and we have maintained an economic growth rate of 10 per cent per annum for the past 10 years. I wish to express the deep gratitude of the people of the Maldives to all our development partners, the United Nations and its agencies for their generous support in realizing such encouraging results.

The establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation in 1985 opened new vistas of regional co-operation, reflecting the shared objectives of the South Asian nations. The Maldives is actively participating in the efforts to enhance peace, stability and security in our region.

(President Gayoom)

The Government and people of the Maldives are looking forward to the fifth meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation, to be held at Malé in November this year, to provide the opportunity to move ahead with our joint programmes aimed at enhancing the quality of life of the peoples of the seven nations.

The Maldives has always endeavoured to contribute its modest share to the untiring efforts of the United Nations in promoting the principles of peace and international co-operation. In a world characterized by tension and conflict, we firmly subscribe to the universally accepted principles of non-interference and non-intervention in the affairs of sovereign States by other States.

Thus it is with deep concern that we view the current crisis in the Gulf region. We reiterate our firm conviction that there could be no justification for the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any State by another. Peace and stability cannot be achieved anywhere in the world unless we respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States. The Maldives urges the Iraqi Government to respond positively to the call of the Security Council and the international community to withdraw its troops from Kuwait immediately, allowing the people of Kuwait to restore normalcy in their country under the leadership of the legitimate Government of Kuwait, headed by the Emir, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. We support all Security Council resolutions on the issue and call on Iraq to release all foreign nationals and to respect the immunity of the diplomatic missions in Kuwait.

While we urge that a peaceful solution be found to the Gulf crisis, we reaffirm our commitment to giving our whole-hearted support to those who seek to eliminate the threat of war. We welcome the new, and indeed historic, trend seen in international relations today, a change which we hope will strengthen the principles of peace and peaceful coexistence. All those who advocate freedom and

(President Gayoom)

justice would salute with us the slow but unmistakable move by the super-Powers to reduce their nuclear-weapon arsenals, and the development of positive ties between the East and the West. The bringing down of the Berlin Wall and the imminent unification of Germany are clear examples of such positive developments. These provide the right setting for future efforts to strengthen peace and security in the world. We are, indeed, heartened by the recent successful achievements by the United Nations in this regard. The ending of the Iraq-Iran war, the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and the attainment of independence by Namibia have brought us fresh hopes for universal peace.

At this juncture let me reiterate our support for the unification of Korea through peaceful dialogue. Notwithstanding our support for that objective, however, let me also express our support for the Republic of Korea in its efforts to seek membership in the United Nations.

The Palestinians have been denied their legitimate right to self-determination for too long. The heroic intifadah carried out by the Palestinian people in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is a courageous expression of the will and determination of the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable rights. The exodus of Soviet Jews has added to the already worsened situation. Israel continues to establish illegal settlements in the occupied territories. My country firmly believes that if peace is to be achieved in the Middle East a comprehensive solution to the Palestine question has to be found based on the right of the Palestinian people to independence and self-determination and to establish their homeland on their national soil. It is time that a more concerted universal effort is made to attain these objectives. In this context, we support the convening of an international conference for the settlement of the Palestinian question.

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(President Gayoom)

The black people of South Africa are continuously being harassed by the white minority régime. While congratulating the United Nations on its commendable efforts in exerting pressure towards the release of Nelson Mandela, we express our conviction that further pressure needs to be exercised on the minority régime if the international community really wants to see the end of the suffering of the black people. Apartheid should be dismantled in its entirety. It is the responsibility of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and indeed all Governments to work towards the elimination of racism, which we believe, is not only a crime against the black people of South Africa but a crime against humanity.

Although the world may be prepared to reduce some of its more destructive weapons and the international community may rejoice at the improving relations between the greater Powers of the world, for many small but sovereign States, like the Maldives, there exists a serious predicament to which a long-term solution needs to be found: that of the protection and security of our States and the elimination of the risk to our sovereignty and independence. The growing danger of international mercenaries has increased the vulnerability of small States to external threats. The armed aggression against the Maldives in 1988 is just one example of the alarming proportions this international menace has now assumed. Some may regard the event as insignificant from a global perspective, but we cannot ignore the fact that these international soldiers of fortune have in recent years threatened the peace and stability of many States. The fact is that today international mercenaries are better organized, better financed and better equipped with sophisticated weapons. Unless immediate and firm action is taken against them, they will remain a significant danger to the world in general.

Small States are not in a position to sacrifice their hard-earned resources to defend themselves against such threats. Their economies are too fragile to allow

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them to divert funds to build up their military capability. Self-help cannot be the only answer. Efforts have to be undertaken by the international community as a whole under the aegis of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations. The United Nations Charter envisages some mechanisms for the protection of the territorial integrity and political independence of States from external threats, but those mechanisms are far from adequate. United Nations resolution 44/51 on "Protection and security of small States", submitted by the Maldives and adopted at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, is indeed a vital step taken in the right direction to remedy the situation. The Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries provides an even greater opportunity to challenge the acts of terrorism and mercenarism.

The economic issues that plague the third-world countries today demand urgent attention. Developing countries are caught in a vicious circle of poverty, stagnation, an overpowering debt burden and other negative trends that perpetuate their underdevelopment. Structural handicaps such as poorly diversified economies weighted by a narrow resource base are not the only explanation for the dismal performance of these countries during the past decade. The reduction of the aid flow from the developed countries, which has marred their development efforts, has caused them much disappointment.

(President Gayoom)

The Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s, adopted by the first United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 1981, called upon the developed countries to contribute 0.15 per cent of their gross national product for official donor assistance to the least developed countries. However, only eight of the rich nations reached the target and the average contribution for official development assistance amounted only to 0.9 per cent. The least developed countries has been increasingly marginalized in the world economy and their share in world exports has decreased to a mere 0.3 per cent in 1988 as compared to 1.4 per cent in 1960. The least developed countries' foreign debt has also increased from $35.8 billion in 1982 to $69.3 billion in 1988. The bottom line is that the economic situation of the developing countries has further deteriorated and that the gap between the rich and the poor has further widened during the last decade.

It is now obvious that economic repercussions of the Gulf crisis will seriously exacerbate the unfavourable trends in the world economy, which, of course, will be felt more severely by small nations. The Maldives is already experiencing grim economic hardships with the steep rise in oil prices affecting the key industries in our foreign exchange earnings, fisheries and tourism. If the crisis remains unsolved, our fragile balance-of-payments situation will be further strained. We strongly suggest that the international community strengthen the commitment to assist the developing countries in order to revitalize their economies and improve the quality of such assistance by making it better adapted to the real needs of the recipient countries. The elimination or substantial reduction of tariffs to guarantee favourable terms of trade, increasing grant aid to help the diversification of their economies, creating a favourable climate for

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more foreign investment and allowing freer resource flow are measures that are urgently required to correct the situation.

The message in fact is that it would be impossible for the developing countries alone to reverse the lingering inertia in their economies no matter how well they determine their priorities. It is true that the second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Paris earlier this month, clearly defined five priorities. Among these, however, the development of human resources, the ending of environmental degradation and the strengthening of the diversified productive sector are but some areas in which no significant improvement is possible unless complementary commitments from their development partners can be mobilized.

Allow me to draw your attention to another matter of key concern to us, an issue to which I have been resolutely seeking help from the international community. I refer to the predicted global warming and sea-level rise, which may endanger the very survival of my island nation. We are trying to do what we can to combat this potential threat. At the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government held in Kuala Lumpur in October 1989, the Maldives proposed that the Commonwealth make every possible effort to expedite the drafting of the framework convention on environment on which the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have been collaborating for some time. The initial report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will be considered at the second World Climate Conference to be held in Geneva from 29 October to 7 November this year, and it is hoped that the final convention will be adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

A Small States Conference on Sea-Level Rise was hosted by the Maldives last year, and the Malé Declaration on Global Warming and Sea-Level Rise, which was

(President Gayoom)

adopted at the Conference, underscored the urgency of the problem and identified many areas of possible international co-operation in this field. As called for in the Malé Declaration, an action group has been established to co-ordinate a joint approach on the issues of climate change, global warming and sea-level rise, and to pursue and follow up on global and regional response strategies. The group - comprising representatives from the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions - is scheduled to meet in Malé early next year.

There is, however, a limit to what the small low-lying States can do. We need international help. In this multipolar world, where interdependency has become a key element, we believe that it is not just the responsibility of the nations threatened by sea-level rise to take preventive measures. We remain convinced that it is also the duty of those States whose race for development over many years had contributed to global warming, ozone depletion, acid rain and tropical deforestation to reverse the existing situation. We cannot accept that economic development has to be achieved at the expense of our environment.

The Maldives calls upon the industrialized nations to take urgent measures to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and to adopt environmentally compatible technology. We urge them to assist the developing countries to implement similar measures. It is our earnest hope that the world community will heed our voice - that of low-lying States - and save us from the ignominy of becoming environmental refugees.

Our children are the most vulnerable sector of our societies to environmental hazards. They are the ones most likely to suffer from the deterioration of our ecosystems. Thousands of children die every year from environment-related diseases such as diarrhoea and upper respiratory disorders. Many more are subjected to air and water pollutants. The effects of environmental changes will affect not just

(President Gayoom)

the present generation of children but also those as yet unborn. More than 82 per cent of the world's children live in the developing countries. Rapid population growth in these regions will, of course, increase their number in future. They have to be fed, clothed, housed, educated and allowed to grow up in a healthy environment. It is our duty to protect our planet for them and for future generations. The World Summit for Children, the first-ever meeting of its kind, that is to be convened here in three days' time, will, I hope, set the stage for this task.

The Maldives is proud to complete 25 years of membership of the United Nations this year. We remain convinced that in spite of the difficulties it faces from time to time, the United Nations is the only force that is capable of effectively dealing with the innumerable challenges and conflicts that threaten the peaceful development of civilization. We place our sincere trust in this Organization that its efforts will lead to the achievement of mankind's most cherished dream - peace among nations, races and individuals.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Maldives for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of Maldives, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

ADDRESS BY MRS. VIOLETA BARRIOS DE CHAMORRO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NICARAGUA

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, Her Excellency Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President BARRIOS de CHAMORRO (interpretation from Spanish): Forty-five years ago, the United Nations was formed to turn guns into ploughshares. Today, in Nicaragua, we are turning this great dream of the United Nations into a reality. This past 25 February, under United Nations auspices, the Nicaraguan people voted for peace. That day marked a grand moment in our history. After more than a half century of oppression, the Nicaraguan people broke free of their prison of ideologies and dictators. The silent act of thousands of our people in the electoral precincts became a vigorous shout in rejection of violence and in favour of peaceful and civic ways of resolving social conflict and political differences.

The Nicaraguan people resoundingly voted for the Government I am honoured to preside over today. They voted to unite us, firmly and for ever, to all other countries which have chosen the path of freedom. The United Nations were guarantors of this election, the first truly free election we have had in 169 years of existence as a republic. I, like many other Nicaraguans of my generation, had for the first time in my life the opportunity to vote freely. In the name of all Nicaraguans, I deeply thank this world forum and all the other international organizations and nations which have supported our desire to be free.

(President Barrios de Chamorro)

You made it possible for Nicaragua, on 25 February, to enter a new era. In only five months we have achieved peace, culminating with the successful demilitarization and disarmament of the 21,000 members of the Nicaraguan resistance. In less than five months, we have substantially reduced the size of the Nicaraguan armed forces, going from an army of 96,000 members to one of 34,000. We are also achieving the removal of all weapons that have been in civilian hands, burying under concrete over 18,000 rifles which belonged to political forces. We are pushing hard to conclude negotiations concerning the limitation of military arms and personnel. Nicaragua's success in disarmament has set an example by destroying weapons such as those I today presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We view as a constructive step for all humanity the disarmament agreements which have been reached between the United States and the Soviet Union. But there is something more. Today I should like to proclaim democracy as the heritage of all mankind. None the less, we must be deeply concerned with what it would mean to lose the birth of democracy in Nicaragua, which has already cost so much, because it has been an important step towards peace and stability throughout all of Central America. Were we to lose peace and not consolidate our democracy, we would be erasing one of the great conquests of America. Therefore, from this rostrum, I call upon all democracies the world over to commit themselves to the cause of Nicaraguan democracy.

In these five months of our new Government, our people have experienced unprecedented liberty and respect for human rights. In Nicaragua, the people are no longer afraid to live in their homeland. In Nicaragua, they are no longer afraid to work. In Nicaragua, they are no longer afraid of criticizing their

(President Barrios de Chamorro)

Government. There is no longer any fear to produce. Small farmers, manufacturers and merchants, all are free to buy and sell their products freely in the marketplace. Parents no longer fear for their childrens' lives. In Nicaragua, they no longer fear going to school to study. They no longer fear thinking for themselves. There is no longer any fear for the future. In Nicaragua, there is no longer any fear of peace. The people know the words of Pope John Paul II, who said the "new face of peace today is the promotion of development".

In the name of all Nicaraguans, I can say today from this global forum that we Nicaraguans have faith in God, faith in freedom, faith in democracy, faith in our homeland, faith in ourselves and faith in all our sister nations which have given us their support and understanding. But there is something of even greater importance. My homeland, Nicaragua, is not only in tune with the democratic currents flowing across the world. It is also the fruit of a new regional movement which the United Nations has actively supported and protected with creativity, originality and courage. I have the honour of representing my country in a year of special significance in modern history.

Nicaragua is firmly committed to maintaining its independence vis-à-vis hegemonic interests. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Nicaragua will assume the challenge of transcending ideological barriers which have separated us and removing them.

(President Barrios de Chamorro)

Nicaragua condemns the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and supports the resolutions adopted by this Organization's Security Council. At the same time we welcome the release of Nelson Mandela and support the elimination of racism and apartheid.

The reunification of the German people is of great significance to my people and stands as a living example of the success of reconciliation. I dream of a unified Central America. I dream of a demilitarized Central America. I dream of a Central America that lives in freedom. I dream of a Central America engaged in permanent dialogue. I dream of a Central America enjoying progress.

We hope that the world will share and continue to support efforts in favour of a democratic Central America, demilitarized and free of any military presence so that one day we can proclaim to the world that Central America is a zone of peace and co-operation. It is time to put an end to violence and armaments and to start working towards the supremacy of civil society over arms. No longer should any Central American have to bow his or her head or lower his dignity in the face of force or dictatorship. We have begun the great revolution of non-violence, the civic and democratic revolution of the vote and of respect for each individual's dignity, freedom and rights. We believe that understanding among nations is the route to international reconciliation.

This revolution, which binds Central America together more and more, advances political integration with the establishment of a Central American parliament. We aspire to the formation of a Central American economic community. We have agreed on a common strategy which will permit our economies to participate under competitive conditions in an economic plan of action which is essential to the life of our region.

(President Barrios de Chamorro)

But we cannot restrict ourselves to our own regional sphere. Latin America is the dream of Bolivar, and is the name of our great community. All in America that is great, is the result of unity. Our great revolutions - the political ones for independence, as well as the cultural ones - have been affected by an awareness of unity, which is reborn again today with the triumph of democracy. Only as a regional community will we gain the power to solve such grave common problems as the external debt, and enable our economies to participate in international markets. We are small and we are poor but our ideals give us stature.

The national reconciliation we are seeking in Nicaragua, as in ongoing efforts towards reconciliation throughout the world today, has no grander objective than to strengthen individual rights. The smaller a country the better it understands and feels the value of human rights. In this sense, and in the name of Nicaragua, I proclaim our firm commitment to support the United Nations Decade for International Law.

Permit me now to turn from the encouraging prospects for the future to the urgent needs of the present. It has been said, in honour of our gender, that women are the guardian angels of the present. A woman with a child in her arms knows that the future is the present. Without doubt we in Nicaragua have opened our arms to peace and democracy. Today Nicaragua confronts a situation similar to that faced by some countries at the end of the Second World War. We know that our own efforts will be essential and a turning-point in the reactivation of our economy, through an economic and social compact, a process we began on the twentieth of this month among workers, business and government. This is a new style of government in Nicaragua.

We recognize and accept our responsibility to realize adjustments and transformations which will make our economies viable. However, this effort must be

(President Barrios de Chamorro)

complemented by international co-operation, including preferential treatment. We view international co-operation, not as a substitute for our own efforts, but as a necessary additional element to achieve steady development and growing participation in international trade.

To support our democracy is to extend the frontiers of liberty and justice in the world. Those who understand that know that Nicaragua's democratization, and its economic recovery, represent a necessary pre-condition for the consolidation of peace throughout the region.

I should like to emphasize the following point, which is crucial if my country is to achieve peace and democracy, and that is the need to support the incorporation of thousands of Nicaraguan refugees who have been displaced, or demobilized from the Nicaraguan resistance, and those soldiers affected by the reductions in the army, into the productive process of the nation.

Lastly, I wish to refer to the enormous burden which the foreign debt represents for our people. The various initiatives and debt strategies which have been used around the world signify real progress in some cases. We view with optimism President Bush's initiative for the Americas, based on proposals for trade, debt and development, which need to be analysed carefully by our countries. None the less these efforts to date are not enough. It is necessary for the international community to give us greater support with the goal of making our heavy debt burden more bearable. Then our countries will be able to direct their financial resources towards the urgent economic and social necessities they face.

I believe that a renegotiation of the debt in concessionary terms for the Central American countries must be viewed from a moral perspective, not solely in economic terms but rather as a necessary step towards resolving the painful development crisis which many of our countries face and which ultimately hurts us

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all. Only in this way can we create and bequeath a more just and stable world to the men and women of tomorrow, the children of today - our children, our grandchildren and other children like them - for whom we have to fight, as my late husband, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, used to say, sometimes to the very death. In this sense we express our firm support of the World Summit for Children, our total conviction that any action by the United Nations today would lack purpose if it did not have the clear desire to achieve for our nations what we want for our children.

(President Barrios de Chamorro)

Nicaragua has been like a rock, placed by geography and by history at the centre of the American world. This rock feels the force of all the political and social winds and is lashed by universal trends. All our heroes have fought against empire-builders and invading forces. The destiny of our nationality seems to transcend boundaries. For this reason, if there is a country which stands at one, profoundly at one with this Organization, it is my homeland. Please do not leave us alone.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Barrios de Chamorro, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

ADDRESS BY MR. HUSSAIN MUHAMMAD ERSHAD, PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Mr. Hussain Muhammad Ershad, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Hussain Muhammad Ershad, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President ERSHAD: Mr. President, warm felicitations are due you on your well-deserved election. This is not just a testimony to the high esteem in which the Assembly holds you; it is also a reflection of the confidence reposed in Malta by the world community.

(President Ershad)

Your predecessor, Mr. Joseph Garba, deserves our appreciation. He was firm and disciplined as well as gentle and generous. He performed his task with distinction. He has brought honour to himself and to his country, Nigeria.

Tributes are also owed Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. His relentless quest for peace and his tireless endeavours for development have justly won high praise.

The expansion of the United Nations family attests to its credibility. We welcome Liechtenstein in our midst. We look forward to its active participation in our affairs.

We meet at a complex time. It may not be the end of history, as some believe. On the contrary, we are on the threshold of a new epoch. Euphoria over the end of the cold war must not give way to complacency. Challenges and opportunities are both in prospect. These must be met and seized. The emerging scenario is not unmixed with danger for the weaker and poorer States. Our concern remains paramount that their political and economic interests be taken into account. We cannot allow them to be compromised by regional hegemonism.

Doubtless great-Power rapprochement is a most positive development. We welcome it. But we must remain on guard that this is not perceived as a licence to unleash new disruptive tensions. Heady political and economic transformations are under way in Europe. These carry an immense potential for the good. The resulting peace dividends could be replicated world wide. However, these changes can impinge on the world in yet unknown ways. These could lead resources and investments away from the developing world. These could also result in the creation of large insular economic blocs from which the weak and the poor would be excluded. There are fears that in the new world order terrrorism would be more rampant.

(President Ershad)

It is to be hoped that none of this will happen. We must encourage the positive counter-forces. These have called for openness, not separateness; tolerance of differing values; dialogue divorced from ideology; and co-operation based on consent. The problems of the world require a concerted response. We are becoming increasingly convinced that only the United Nations can fashion this, through co-operative management and collective security.

(President Ershad)

It is possible that the aspirations of the founding fathers of the United Nations, enshrined in its Charter, will yet be realized. Together, we must work to eliminate the root cause of war, eradicate poverty, tackle indebtedness, reverse environmental degradation, fight drug abuse, and foster social progress. This may seem an ambitious agenda of high aims, but the vigour of our societies can be preserved only through the tireless pursuit of noble goals.

Our hopes for a stable decade were shattered by the jolt from the current Gulf crisis. The United Nations has condemned the invasion and annexation of Kuwait. It has called upon Iraq to vacate the annexed territories and to restore the legitimate Government of Kuwait. Bangladesh is steadfastly committed to upholding the United Nations resolutions. We cannot compromise on the vital principles involved. All peace-loving nations have a major stake in preserving the sovereignty, security, political independence and territorial integrity of any State in the international community. These principles are ingrained in our Constitution. We cherish them, and hold them very dear.

It was on the basis of these considerations that we sent a contingent of troops to Saudi Arabia, at the kingdom's request. Its role would be purely defensive. Our national Parliament endorsed this decision by a unanimous resolution. This step was considered to be supportive of the cause of peace and stability in the region, and of the broader interests of the Islamic community as a whole.

Meanwhile, the world confronts the tormenting trauma of a vast humanitarian problem. Several hundred thousand expatriates, eager to return home, are stranded in the region. Their plight is one of the utmost misery. Bangladesh was among the first countries to urge on the United Nations system the need to activate itself in the repatriation process. This has since been developed into a remarkable triumph of orderly organization by this body. I myself travelled to Turkey and Saudi

(President Ershad)

Arabia to encourage the process. The neighbouring countries, despite their acute constraints, have rendered unstinted assistance. Our gratitude to them is unbounded. Our tributes extend to the relevant United Nations agencies - in particular, to the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization, the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, the International Office of Migration, and the non-governmental organizations. I must make a special mention of the donor countries, which have provided most generous financial assistance. Much more remains to be done. The responsibilities of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, will be onerous. I have no doubt he will discharge them with his usual skill and wisdom.

The impact of the crisis on the global economy is great. For the fragile economies of the developing world - in particular, of the least developed countries - the consequences are disastrous. For Bangladesh, these take the form of the cost of repatriation and rehabilitation, loss of remittances, a cut-back in export earnings, the high cost of petroleum and petroleum products, and constriction of development projects. For a least-developed country like Bangladesh this is a problem of immeasurable proportions.

Nevertheless, we take solace from the unity and determination of the world community to act together. The super-Powers are displaying an extraordinary cohesion. We fervently appeal to the fraternal people and Government of Iraq to heed our appeals. They must rescind their illegal annexation and resolve their original differences with Kuwait by peaceful means. Bangladesh stands committed to supporting any move in this direction. In this respect, we would welcome any meaningful initiative by the Islamic Conference and the Muslim community as a whole.

The agreement between Iran and Iraq finally to settle their long-standing conflict is a development we joyously welcome. It is our hope that this will

(President Ershad)

result in a durable settlement that will ultimately pave the way for stability in the region. The task of reconstruction and rehabilitation must now be the sole focus of concentration in the Gulf. This is why the recent events in the area are all the more saddening.

With regard to the Middle Eastern region, we are alarmed by Israel's increased intransigence. The prevalent unstable situation is rendered more dangerous by Israel's negative posture on any move to find a just and durable solution to the issue of Palestine. Let me unequivocally declare that Bangladesh's commitment to the Palestinian cause is unflinching. We condemn Israel's provocative action in settling Jewish immigrants in the occupied territories. We consider reprehensible their atrocious repression of the glorious intifadah. Israel's control of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights clearly rest on force, and must cease. Israel must withdraw from all territories illegally occupied since 1967. The inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including a State of their own with Jerusalem as its capital, must be restored. In this connection, we reaffirm our call for the early convening of an international peace conference with the participation of all States, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing.

Despite significant advances towards a political solution, the Afghans continue to suffer. Millions of refugees are yet to return home in safety and honour. The continued induction of weaponry into the area and civil strife have retarded the immense task of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Settlement of the problem calls also for a truly representative broad-based Government reflecting the popular will. The Afghan people must determine their own destiny. They must be able to choose their own Government without any outside intervention or interference. We must ensure the preservation of the sovereignty, territorial

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integrity and political independence of Afghanistan, and its non-aligned and Islamic character.

On Cambodia, we hail the agreement just reached. The Cambodian people have suffered too long, too painfully. We are fully aware, however, that despite this historic step many obstacles remain and must be overcome. Our commitment to a solution does not lie in words alone. From the outset Bangladesh has offered to support the United Nations peace efforts in tangible terms through the contribution of civilian and military personnel. I firmly reiterate this offer today.

In our own region - South Asia - the escalation of tensions between Pakistan and India concern us deeply. I urge the leaders of the two countries to exercise maximum restraint. I hope the process of constructive dialogue, recently initiated, can have positive results. Bangladesh remains committed to developing close ties with all our neighbours on the basis of justice, equality, mutual benefit and respect for international law. We have great confidence in the viability of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation. Four consecutive summits have testified to the success of that organization in fulfilling its socio-economic mandate. It has also acted as a harmonizing political force. We look forward to the fifth summit, scheduled to be held in the Maldives in November this year.

In divided Cyprus, despite intensification of the search for a solution between the leaders of the Greek and Cypriot communities, an overall settlement has proved elusive. However, possible options for resolution have emerged that could safeguard the legitimate interests and could meet the concerns of both communities. These merit close examination. Our hope is that ultimately they will come to fruition. Similarly, it is our fervent hope that the renewed contacts and recent initiatives between the two Koreas will lead to reconciliation and an acceptable solution.

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We support the United Nations role in Central America promoting the practical realization of the various agreements reached. In particular, the United Nations efforts in organizing and monitoring the implementation of those agreements deserves praise. We are encouraged by the leadership in the quest for peace provided by the Heads of State and of Government of the region.

In Africa too, there is discernible forward movement, of which Western Sahara is an example. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) is actively involved there with United Nations support. Institutionalized co-operation among the Maghreb countries is a hopeful sign that the issue may finally be resolved.

Epoch-making changes are also taking place in southern Africa. The independence of Namibia, the release of Nelson Mandela, the lifting of the state of emergency and the promise of reforms by President De Klerk are welcome; yet, the daily blood-letting in that unfortunate land is a painful reminder of South Africa's woes. Apartheid is yet to be dismantled. Our struggle, and the active involvement of the United Nations, must continue until such time as South Africa transforms itself into a democratic, multiracial State.

In the world today, no region, no country and no people is too far away. Our hearts go out to the Liberians in their suffering. The world must do more to alleviate their miseries. We must make all efforts to bring about peace in the troubled country.

We are heartened by the recent successes in the areas of arms control and disarmament; we would mention the super-Power agreements in particular. However, we must bear in mind that weapons and conflicts feed one another. Guns will proliferate if the need for them exists. Therefore, disarmament cannot truly succeed unless we resolutely alter the current global milieu. Time and again, Bangladesh has stressed its commitment to general and complete disarmament. Peace dividends must be devoted to development.

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Our position is evident in our conviction that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is vital to the maintenance of global peace and security. We would call upon the nuclear-weapon States to enter into substantive negotiations for a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Also, they must assure and strengthen positive and also negative security guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. We highlighted our concerns about these issues at the recent Fourth NPT Review Conference. We believe that sufficent groundwork has been laid for our efforts to achieve these fundamental goals before the 1995 review and extension conference.

We consider the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and of zones of peace to be amongst the measures which are integral to a non-proliferation regime. There is also an urgent need to address conventional disarmament. Competition among neighbours in this can have, indeed has had, disastrous consequences. The work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean must resume, with all States participating. We must concentrate on holding the conference in Colombo as soon as possible.

Recent events have poignantly demonstrated that the roots of conflict most often lie in economic causes. Over past years, there has been growing anxiety about the decline in the course of development. Substantive factors and attitudes combined to aggravate the situation. Mutual accusations and sterile debate between the developed and the developing worlds led to stagnation and even to deterioration in the situation in the latter. The economic and technological gap between the rich and the poor countries widened. Many developing countries tried to follow the prescription for structural adjustment, at great cost and with great hardship. Collapsing commodity price structures, volatile exchange rates, the shrinkage of aid in real terms, growing indebtedness and diminishing purchasing power threaten to suffocate the developing economies.

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Against this backdrop, we welcome the results of the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, which forged a new global consensus on ways to promote meaningful co-operation. There are substantial opportunities to spell out the elements of this consensus in formulating the International Development Strategy for the current decade, to be adopted by the General Assembly this session.

The results of the recently held Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will be a key supplementary factor. The outcome of the Conference, though falling short of expectations, was in many ways a success. Here I must commend the very positive role played by President Mitterrand and his great country, France. On the critical issues of increased resource flows, external debt, market access for least-developed-country (LDC) products, and commodity-related questions, some progress was achieved. There must now be all-out efforts, both on the part of the donors and by the LDCs, fully to implement the new plan of action. Given the current turbulence in the international scene and the dire impact on that scene of the Gulf crisis, the development of the LDCs will remain an uphill task. Consequently, focus on their problems must be sharpened.

We look forward with keen anticipation to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Bangladesh is actively participating in the preparatory process, which is under way. The Conference must produce results that will assist countries, particularly in the developing world, to meet their obligations. We hope the proposed conventions on climate change and on the protection of biodiversity will soon be ready for signature.

A mainstay of the consolidation of global peace, development and security is the effort to strengthen the rule of international law. I attach special significance, therefore, to the proclamation of the 1990s as United Nations Decade of International Law. Priority must be accorded to strengthening the world

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law-of-the-sea order, the completion of provisions governing non-navigational uses of international watercourses, and to formulating a legal régime for the environment.

Of paramount importance, in the final analysis, is the enhancement of human worth. The rules that constitute the corpus of human rights must be given meaningful definitions. Human rights are inseparably enmeshed with the right to development. Today, a billion people barely survive on the margin of existence. They cannot be, must not be, denied their most basic, most fundamental right, the right to a decent life. We must ensure that right in this, the last decade of this present millenium. Their journey into the next century must be led by a beacon of hope.

In this, the United Nations can, and indeed must, be of assistance. In this forum, let us adopt some resolutions unanimously. Let us resolve to face the future together, in friendship and fraternity. Let us harmonize the dictates of individual national interests with those of global needs. Let us balance the imperatives of self-reliance with those of collective endeavour. Let us strengthen global security so as to face together the dangers that may imperil us. Let us work together in earnest to resolve our differences, so that these in the end do not defeat us.

This is our common dream. It is also one that, should we so desire, can be turned into a reality.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. Hussain Muhammad Ershad, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

ADDRESS BY HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH JABER AL-AHMAD AL-JABER AL-SABAH, AMIR OF THE STATE OF KUWAIT

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Amir of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and to invite him to address the Assembly

Sheikh AL-SABAH (interpretation from Arabic): In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. As muslims, we always begin everything by invoking the name of God, our Lord, and in praising the Lord we seek to draw closer to Him, Whom we praise even in times of distress.

I offer you, Mr. President, in my own name and on behalf of the people of Kuwait, sincere congratulations on your election as President of the forty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly. You represent, Sir, a friendly country that has very close ties with Kuwait. Both our countries, as well as all other States, draw strength and effectiveness from the principles of justice and international law. We are confident, Mr. President, that under your stewardship, the Assembly will be able to fulfil the aspirations of the international community at this point in time against an extremely complex international backdrop.

I wish also to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Garba, for the skill and prudence he demonstrated in addressing the concerns of the world community.

In the same vein, special thanks and gratitude go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, for his persistent and outstanding efforts in the interest of international peace and security as well as his keen interest in

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enhancing the role and effectiveness of the world Organization with a view to attaining the noble goals set by the founding fathers.

Since Liechtenstein has now joined the United Nations, it is our pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the new Member and to wish its friendly people every success in their new status. We trust that Liechtenstein's presence here will promote multilateralism in all its aspects.

I speak from this rostrum today as my peaceful country is passing through extremely harsh circumstances that have given rise to an unprecedented crisis in the history of the United Nations, which, since its inception, has sought to uphold justice on the basis of international law. Indeed, the Security Council has demonstrated that role by recently adopting a series of firm resolutions in the face of naked and brutal aggression against the State of Kuwait.

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There is no doubt that the key role played by the Security Council is indeed a propitious one under the prevailing grave circumstances in Kuwait and, in fact, in the world at large. It is our earnest hope that this role will continue to grow without waning and gain momentum without setbacks in order to consolidate the rule of international law.

Today, I bring to you the message of a peace-loving nation, a nation that has consistently worked for peace, a nation that reached out with a helping hand to all those who truly needed help, a nation that sought mediation and reconciliation among adversaries. It is this very nation whose security and stability have been trampled upon as a result of its abiding belief in the lofty principles inspired by our true Muslim faith and echoed in universal charters, pacts and codes of morality.

Today, I plead before you the cause of a people whose land, until so recently, was a beacon for peaceful co-existence and genuine brotherhood among the family of nations, a people whose national territory was a gathering place for individuals from various peaceful nations who sought a decent and dignified life through constructive work. Some of these people have now been made homeless, wanderers living only on hope in their banishement, while others have become prisoners or fighters refusing, even at the risk of their own lives, to surrender or yield to occupation regardless of its violence and brutality.

The crisis of Kuwait is a manifold tragedy, whose dire consequences affect not only Kuwaitis, but also other peoples. In fact, it has jeopardized stability in the world, especially in the Gulf region.

And so, I come to this forum, which is the helm of international action, in order to acknowledge the overwhelming global solidarity that has been shown to us in a multitude of Security Council resolutions that have been passed in an unprecedented fashion. This demonstrates rock-solid international rejection of the

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assassination of the norms of international law, rules of good neighbourly relations and established customs and practices by armed military invaders, whose tanks rolled over and crushed all those concepts. Indeed, this is what makes the Iraqi aggression against the State of Kuwait quite a peculiar case, for we have never seen in contemporary, post-Second World War history a country that overran a sovereign independent State, a member of the United Nations, and then sought not only to annex it by brutal force, but also to erase its name and entire entity from the world political map and wipe out the parameters of its national identity as defined by its institutions and its political, economic and social structures. All of this has taken place as we approach the end of the twentieth century!

I came here to tell you of the horrors and suffering we are enduring both inside and outside our occupied homeland, and to put before you our just case. Now, the fate of a people, of a nation, is in your hands. Expecting you to act in good conscience, we are confident that the only measure that will win your endorsement is support for our legitimate right to liberate our land. Furthermore, we trust that you will not waver in deciding on the measures needed to compel the invading aggressors to restore the legitimate authority and to put an end to their barbaric acts and deviations.

The aggression by the Iraqi régime against the State of Kuwait, which resulted in occupation, and the vicious Iraqi attempts to annex Kuwait in flagrant violation of all charters, norms of conduct and treaties, including those legal instruments concluded between the two countries and deposited right here with the United Nations, is not an ordinary conflict between two States over a piece of land. Rather, the Iraqi aggression was the culmination of a pre-meditated scheme to occupy and seize the entire State by force of arms. This aggression, alas, was

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perpetrated by a country with which we had several internationally recognized treaties and agreements within the frameworks of the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations and other international organizations.

This Iraqi régime has invented false pretexts and untenable claims against my peaceful and peace-loving country. In response to them, and despite our firm conviction that those claims were totally unfounded, we proposed the setting up of a mutually acceptable, neutral Arab arbitration panel, to which both parties would submit their differences. However, Iraq turned down that offer out of hand. Our last attempt at a peaceful resolution of our problems with Iraq was the bilateral round of talks in Jeddah, in our sister Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the course of which Kuwait stressed the need to resolve its outstanding problems with Iraq within an Arab context. But Iraq's plans were not anchored in any legal framework or based on any formal legal instruments. In fact, Iraq was bent on sweeping through the entire territory of Kuwait, violating its sovereignty and violating the sanctity of Kuwaiti citizens' lives and property. As a consequence, rape, destruction, terror and torture are now the rule of the day in the once peaceful and tranquil land of Kuwait. Hundreds of thousands of Kuwaiti citizens, along with the nationals of various other countries who were our guests, have been made homeless and many of them have had their life savings robbed. Hundreds have lost their lives. Others have been held hostage. Indeed, at this very moment, an intense campaign of terror, torture and humiliation continues unabated in that dear land. We receive daily reports of massacres and continuing systematic armed looting and destruction of State assets and individual property.

This has prompted the forces of right, justice and peace in the world to try to acquaint themselves with the calamity of those innocents. In accordance with its responsibilities derived from the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to

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the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the International Committee of the Red Cross has attempted to dispatch a team that would have reported on their conditions. But the aggressor, persisting in its inhumane conduct, declined to allow this international committee to send representatives to Kuwait in order to carry out their tasks. It also refused to let envoys of the Secretary-General of the United Nations visit Kuwait to verify the conditions of its population.

Such conduct constitutes yet another violation by the aggressor of international and humanitarian covenants, thus demanding a resolute stand against it.

Against all these odds, an enormous source of solace to us has been the position taken by virtually all the countries of the world in support of Kuwait's rights. Hence, the League of Arab States, the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Islamic countries and the Security Council of the United Nations all took appropriate decisions condemning the Iraqi aggression and calling for the annulment of the annexation act and the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the invading Iraqi forces to the border that existed prior to the aggression. Thus, the legitimate Government of Kuwait would be able to exercise its functions and responsibilities as it used to before the invasion. It is with a deep sense of pride and honour that we hail the stand taken by the proud people of Kuwait in defence of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of their State against the usurper, whose forces are armed to the teeth with weapons of destruction.

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Two years have now elapsed since I took an initiative from this rostrum calling for the cancellation of foreign debts under the burden of which numerous countries suffer enormously. In point of fact, those countries have fallen victim to a host of factors that not only thwarted any prospect for their economic prosperity but also generated mounting pressure on them. Though some measure of progress has indeed been made in this area, the magnitude and scope of the problem continue to pose a grave threat to the lives of millions of human beings, a threat that in all likelihood may undermine world peace and stability. The long-standing academic argument that economic stability and political stability are closely interlinked is perhaps as valid and timely now as it has ever been. Along these lines, it would be advisable for us all to review the conclusions of the United Nations-sponsored Conference on the Problems of the Least Developed Countries, held in Paris earlier this month, in order to appreciate better the weight of the problem and the urgency it has assumed with a view to making tangible headway towards an effective remedy in the interest of all mankind. In this spirit, Kuwait, for its part, has decided, in line with our previous proposal regarding this issue, to write off all interests on its loans. In addition, Kuwait will consider with the poorest nations arrangements regarding the principal of its loans with a view to easing the burden of their debts.

From the early years of independence, my country has been privileged to be in the forefront of States that gave development aid to other countries. Kuwait's contributions represent the highest rate in the world in terms of gross national product, amounting to 8.3 per cent of its gross national product. This highlights Kuwait's genuine desire to contribute towards raising the standard of living in the developing nations. It also proves that Kuwait has been a leader in the efforts to improve the economic infrastructure of other countries.

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The devastating consequences of the aggression against Kuwait and its civilian population, with its repercussions on the stability and security of the entire Gulf region, together with its ripple effects on world stability, as we have clearly seen, have been far-reaching indeed. They have already had adverse effects on long-standing crucial issues we had always hoped the world community would eventually resolve satisfactorily. I have in mind the problem of the Palestinian people and the tragedy of the occupation of the southern part of our sister State, Lebanon.

The State of Kuwait will remain, as always, faithful to its principles, true to its system of values, close to its friends and faithful of its obligations and commitments.

In closing, may I take this opportunity to address a few words to my people, my kinsfolk, the loyal sons and daughters of Kuwait, from this forum, a forum for justice and fairness, a forum for guidance and hope, to assure each and every one of them that Allah, the Almighty, will ultimately secure triumph for us, thanks to their struggle and resolve, thanks to the gracious role of the United Nations, thanks to the support lent to us by our brethren and friends along with all people of good conscience throughout the world. The withdrawal of the invaders is, God willing, undoubtedly imminent. We shall return to our Kuwait, the oasis of safety and peace, which embraces all Kuwaitis and foreigners living in our midst as brothers. Together, we shall join hands in concert and harmony to secure our

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development and progress. This will be a fulfilment of God's promise as rendered in the following verse:

"O ye who believe!
If ye will aid
(The cause of) Allah,
He will aid you,
And plant your feet firmly." (The Holy Koran, XLVII:7)

And whose word can be truer than Allah's?

Thank you and may Allah, our Lord, bring you all peace and grace.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Amir of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. ABU HASSAN (Malaysia): Mr. President, it is fitting that I begin my address before the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session by extending my congratulations to you. Your election reflects our full confidence that you will, given your wisdom, experience and skill, successfully discharge your responsibilities for guiding the Assembly to a fruitful conclusion. Your predecessor, His Excellency Major-General Joseph Garba, carried out his task with dedication and I express my appreciation to him for a job well done. I must here underline too how impressed Malaysia has been by the indefatigable efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, in the pursuit of peace and stability.

I offer words of welcome and congratulations to the delegation of Namibia, participating for the first time in a regular session of the General Assembly, and to the delegation of Liechtenstein, the latest addition to the membership of the United Nations. I also welcome the delegation of Yemen, now united under a single banner. I should like to welcome in advance the United German delegation, in anticipation of the official reunification of Germany on 3 October 1990. The entry of new States into the United Nations fold will further enhance the universal attributes of this world body. In this regard Malaysia would support a request by the Republic of Korea to become a Member of the United Nations. Such a step would, in our assessment, also contribute to further rapprochement between the two Koreas.

We are witnessing important changes taking place in many parts of the world, changes which inevitably affect the state of international relations, offering both challenges and opportunities. Changes taking place in the Soviet Union, attributable largely to the policies of President Gorbachev himself, have created a climate of confidence that has brought an end to the cold war which had for

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decades divided the world into camps and alignments. The growing rapprochement between the two super-Powers and the changing international scenario provide us with hope for a new world order where the mistrust and rivalry of yester-year will give way to co-operation, consultation and peaceful coexistence between States.

A pertinent question which concerns us is how these changes will affect the workings of the United Nations and its role in the interactions between and among States. I would say: to a very important extent. Nevertheless, the United Nations remains the organization that can provide the best forum and vehicle for building international consensus and promoting international co-operation through its various organs, in particular the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. In the past, rivalry between the super-Powers has caused the Security Council to be deadlocked over many issues and prevented the Council from taking necessary action because of the use of the veto. However, we are now witnessing a mutuality of interests and a common will to resolve international crises made possible by the changing international scenario and the recognition of the centrality of the role of the United Nations. The debate on the invasion of Kuwait is testimony to the political will now prevailing to seek united action on issues brought before the Council. Malaysia would like to believe that the world is now moving into an era where the principle of collective security, albeit embryonic, is put into practice, fulfilling the vision of the founding fathers of the United Nations.

Malaysia is proud to be part of the evolution taking place in the United Nations, in particular in the Security Council. We have always stood for the effective discharge of the Council's conciliatory and mandatory powers to ensure universal compliance with and implementation of its decisions. Malaysia also believes that a rationalization of the function and mandate of the Security Council

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should be carried out in the spirit of a dynamic and constantly evolving United Nations, to enable the Council to address all issues at hand more effectively.

There is now a large measure of understanding among the five permanent members of the Security Council on a number of issues and this, if sustained, should augur well for the future work of the Council and the United Nations as a whole. But this understanding should not lead to exclusivity in decision-making. The five must be responsible in their actions not only to themselves but also to the rest of the international community. They should not use their veto power to impede consensus or prevent action. Their work should serve the interests of all Member States and not just the interests of certain States or groups of States only. While the Gulf crisis and the question of Cambodia have demonstrated lately a unity of purpose among the permanent five, this unity must also provide evidence of their willingness to work closely together on other problems that have eluded solution all this while, in particular the question of Palestine.

The renewed faith in democracy, as borne out by the political and social upheavals in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world will to a significant extent, also have an impact on voting behaviour at the United Nations. If during the cold war votes were cast according to the political alignments of Member States, we now should be able to witness in the Assembly a significant decline in such voting behaviour. We hope that the decline of bloc voting will lead to the achievement of more decisions by consensus on many issues. This will certainly facilitate the achievement of more realistic solutions to many global problems.

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In order for the United Nations to function with greater responsibilities, it must have the necessary financial resources, both through the timely and unconditional payment of assessed contributions by Member States and through substantial voluntary contributions by States to assist in particular projects or activities. It is evident that the peace-keeping function of the United Nations and, hence, the corollary financial burden of its peace-keeping operations have increased considerably. This is one area which needs the close attention of Member States.

The agenda of this session of the General Assembly in itself provides an impressive list of important issues. Regional conflicts remain a question of great concern. Malaysia hopes that these conflicts can be resolved peacefully with the appropriate involvement of the United Nations, as was the case in Namibia and Nicaragua. We would support further efforts by the Secretary-General and the countries in Central America to effect a peaceful settlement of other problems facing the region. Malaysia also feels encouraged that the Secretary-General has been able to begin the process of implementing a settlement plan in Western Sahara. Malaysia notes that serious efforts have been undertaken to find a durable solution to the question of Afghanistan. Malaysia welcomes the agreement between Iraq and Iran to implement fully Security Council resolution 598 (1987) and bring their costly war to a peaceful end. Nevertheless, we remain perturbed that tension continues elsewhere in the region.

The end of the cold war should pave the way for the solution of many of the important problems still on the agenda of the United Nations. Of these, the Palestinian problem is perhaps the most crucial. While the world continues to laud the triumph of democracy in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, it cannot remain incongruously silent on the democratic rights of the Palestinian people, people who have remained the victims of Israel's policies of aggression, intimidation and

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oppression and who have been denied their rights to self-determination and a homeland. If we are indeed on the brink of the era of collective security in international relations, then, pray, let us see this spirit of collectivism extend to the solution of the Palestinian problem as well. Otherwise, it would be difficult for us to claim that the practice of double standards does not exist among the key Members of the United Nations. For Malaysia, it is unacceptable that the Security Council could pronounce itself so forcefully on the Gulf crisis when it has not been able to act on the critical issue of Palestine.

Apartheid is another long-standing problem, but there still appears to be hope for a solution. The release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the unbanning of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and other anti-apartheid groups, the partial lifting of the state of emergency, and the renunciation of the armed struggle by the ANC have been important developments in creating a climate conducive for negotiations. The dialogue that has been initiated between Nelson Mandela, as representative of the black majority in South Africa, and President De Klerk must continue to its logical conclusion, that is, the attainment of a one-man one-vote system in a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa and the end of apartheid. Until this objective is achieved, the international community should continue to maintain both pressure and sanctions on the South African régime. We are concerned, however, at the recent upsurge in violence between the blacks, in which inter-factional rivalry has led to the deaths of many. We are now heartened by the latest indications that Nelson Mandela and Chief Buthelezi will meet; this augurs well for black solidarity and will, we hope, prevent further bloodshed. We would urge President De Klerk, who is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in South Africa, to take appropriate actions, including actions to deal with questions relating to police partisanship and white-extremist involvement.

(Mr. Abu Hassan, Malaysia)

In South-East Asia, the Cambodian conflict will, we hope, come to a peaceful end soon. The recent agreement in Jakarta of all the Cambodian parties to accept the framework document of the permanent five as a basis for a comprehensive political settlement and the formation of the Supreme National Council is a promising start to the process of achieving a just and durable peaceful solution. The adoption of Security Council resolution 668 (1990), in which Malaysia fully participated, should provide further impetus to the efforts to speed up this process. The Cambodians themselves must now resolve their remaining differences, and it is also for them to demonstrate greater flexibility in the drawing up of a comprehensive political settlement. This will make possible the early reconvening of the Paris International Conference on Cambodia, where a peace agreement on the protracted conflict can be signed and sealed. As a member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which has long involved itself in seeking a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodian problem, Malaysia welcomes the progress made thus far and stands ready to welcome the decision of the Cambodian people in regard to their own future, through free and fair elections organized and conducted by the United Nations.

Against the backdrop of rapprochement between the two super-Powers and a definite trend towards a reduction in regional tensions, the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August came as a major shock, underlining the fragility and volatility of our international system. Malaysia was distressed by the resort to armed intervention by one Muslim brother against another, both of whom Malaysia values in friendship. This consideration notwithstanding, Malaysia stood firmly by the principles which we strongly believe in and acted accordingly as a Security Council member to support all Council resolutions pertaining to the invasion, a violation of international law which we could never condone. In seeking a peaceful and early solution to the crisis, we have maintained that the United Nations should play a

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central role and that, at the same time, all resolutions adopted by the Security Council should be effectively implemented. Malaysia has insisted in the Council that diplomatic and political efforts be continuously exerted to bring an end to the crisis.

The Middle East remains the world's most volatile region. It is clear that a major event occurring in the region will have strong political, economic and religious consequences around the world. For obvious reasons, it needs our full attention. The recent turn of events in tne Gulf is bringing the region, and the world, close to the precipice of war. The build-up of forces in the region is certainly a cause for deep concern. As a matter of principle and being a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Malaysia is averse to military forces of major Powers being transplanted into other regions. We must exert every effort to avoid a dangerous development that could spark off a full-scale war, with its unwelcome consequences to the region and the world at large.

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The international economic situation continues to remain a matter of great concern to all of us, particularly the developing countries. Many of these continue to experience slow economic growth, in some cases negative growth, in addition to problems of external indebtedness, depressed commodity prices, market access and a host of other problems. Earlier this year, at the special session on international economic co-operation, we agreed to undertake concrete measures to promote the economic growth and development of developing countries. This commitment must now be translated into constructive action. The recently concluded conference pertaining to less developed countries is a welcome step towards alleviating the plight of these particular countries.

The problems of the developing countries have to be placed in proper perspective. It is with this in mind that 15 of the developing countries got together in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in early June this year. These countries do not claim to be the self-appointed arbiters and regulators of world economic affairs. Neither did they sit down to conspire against anyone - in the North or in the South. Their aims were not ambitious. They came together to take a realistic approach to problems and to explore the potential for wider and more intensive South-South co-operation. Malaysia hopes that a forum such as the meeting of that group of 15, with the support of other developing countries, can help to facilitate dialogue, not only among countries in the South but also between the South and the North. We believe that an organized South would contribute to the promotion of just and viable solutions to the South's varied economic problems.

The developing countries recognize that there have to be ways and means to find solutions to the problems faced by them. There are various forums for this purpose. The United Nations is certainly one of them. This Organization should be encouraged to address international economic issues with a view to contributing towards finding the right solutions. The Group of 77 remains an important forum

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for dialogue among the developing countries and a conduit for dialogue between them and the developed countries at the United Nations and in other forums.

It must be realized that in this post-cold-war era, new arrangements for a more stable international economic and trading system have to be found. The North cannot totally neglect the problems and needs of many countries in the South simply because there are newly emerging democracies in the North that require help. The countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America have an equal stake in the future of the world economy. Their needs are equally urgent, if not more urgent, than those of countries in Eastern Europe. They must not be ignored. Let us give the United Nations system the opportunity to build a consensus on these pressing questions.

All of us are in full agreement that environmental degradation must cease. We are all committed to a clean and environmentally safe world not only for us and our generation but for those who come after. It is this fundamental commitment that has enabled the United Nations and its agencies, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme, to play a leadership role in addressing environmental issues which threaten man's life-support systems. The active involvement of the United Nations is reflected in its various resolutions and activities, in particular the forthcoming 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. We wish to recall and to state that for the 1992 Conference to succeed we must all dedicate our efforts to ensure the following: first, the effective transfer of environmentally sound and appropriate technology to developing countries; secondly, the provision of new and additional financial resources to enable developing countries to play their role; and, thirdly, a supportive international economic environment which promotes economic growth and development, particularly that of developing countries.

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Highlighting environmental issues without a linkage to development would not serve any of our interests. Similarly, neither legal instruments nor unilateral measures, including bans and distorted campaigns, will contribute to our cause of a clean and safe world. Environment and development are mutually reinforcing and interrelated.

The issue of the protection of the global environment cannot be separated from the question of Antarctica. There should be a truly global environmental convention for the conservation and protection of Antarctica to benefit mankind. Antarctica presents the best opportunity for the international community to embark upon a comprehensive multilateral effort to secure a safe and clean environment for future generations. We should all support efforts to ban prospecting and mining in and around Antarctica and to ensure that all activities will be used exclusively for peaceful scientific research. Malaysia supports the idea of preserving Antarctica as a nature reserve or world park. All of us should be able to find common ground, through the United Nations, between those that are parties to the Antarctic Treaty system and those that are not. We cannot afford to lose that continent to our own narrow and selfish interests.

Drug abuse and illicit trafficking is another very important issue which requires the appropriate response of the international community since it affects all countries. Member States agreed at the seventeenth special session, on drugs, last February that the United Nations should be provided with the necessary mandate and resources to increase international co-operation to combat the drug problem. Let us make that a reality. This problem is far too important for us to expect the United Nations to carry out its tasks in this field without its capability being strengthened. We should all support any proposal that can make the United Nations more efficient and effective in this area, including a restructuring of the relevant United Nations bodies into a single entity. The drug problem has assumed

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a very complex character, requiring responses at all levels. Hence, international action should be co-ordinated through the United Nations, while Governments do their part in coping with the problem domestically. Malaysia for one has gone to great lengths to combat drug abuse in the country.

The 1990s should be a decade of renewed faith in the United Nations. We have witnessed significant developments recently which will have a lasting impact on the future of the United Nations system as a whole. In the entire history of the United Nations never has the time been so propitious for it to regain the confidence and trust of the international community as it is now. With renewed faith from all Members alike, the United Nations can play its rightful role in helping to reshape this post-cold-war world. The United Nations needs our full support.

Mr. BONGO (Gabon) (interpretation from French): Sir, your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session is a tribute to your personal qualities. It reflects the contribution of Malta, your country, to our common work of peace and co-operation between peoples and nations.

The delegation of Gabon considers it both a pleasure and a duty to extend to you our wishes for full success in the discharge of your heavy and honourable task.

Major-General Joseph Garba, your predecessor, through his dedication and competence has also served the United Nations well. My delegation joins in the tribute unanimously rendered to him today.

Indeed, the United Nations will remember the extremely positive action of Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar in the restoration of our Organization to the role given to it by its founders 45 years ago. I should therefore like to express to him the sincere congratulations of Gabon and assure him of its readiness to work towards the achievement of peace and justice in the world.

Gabon would like to welcome the recent admission of Namibia and Liechtenstein to our great Organization.

The course of present international relations causes some disquiet as compared with the serenity characterizing them not so long ago. This contrast, which appeared in a rather brief period, has caught the United Nations short because of its unexpected nature. Through the United Nations, each one of its Members must take any initiative conducive to the restoration of a climate of confidence more in keeping with the ideals that have brought us all together here.

Our Organization seems to have reached an important moment in its evolution. We declare our readiness to become firmly involved in the building of a new order of security in the interest of all and in the struggle for development. We could not succeed in that endeavor without being animated by a firm resolve to eliminate

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persistent scourges, such as apartheid, drugs, and economic and social underdevelopment, to which the General Assembly has recently devoted special sessions. These are some of the main challenges that we must face.

But it is none the less true that the spirit of peace has made great progress as an essential fact of the coexistence of nations. Other human values, such as democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, are also observed more closely today. Indeed, from a study of these last few years we can conclude with certainty that contemporary societies are becoming more democratic. It is in this context that profound institutional changes are now being brought about in Gabon, where, by means of elections that are taking place, we are embarking on the setting up of a multiparty parliament.

In response to the wishes of its compatriots, the President of the Republic, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, convened a national conference on democracy, which was held at Libreville in March and April last. That historic meeting involved all the views represented by many political or social/professional associations.

The debate on ideas was held in a spirit of openness, freedom and responsibility. There resulted a national consensus, thanks to which a new constitution now rules Gabon's political life; a national charter of freedoms has been adopted; a government reflecting several political views has been established; and to watch over the smooth functioning of the fledgling democracy, a national council for democracy and a committee entrusted with following through on the decisions of the national conference have been created.

That same mission will be assured in the media by the National Communications Council that will be set up following legislative elections. These multiparty

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elections, the first held in my country in more than a generation, mark a crucial stage in the strengthening of democratic mores in Gabon. The new institutions, which will now serve as a framework for Gabonese political life, will be built, above all, on the primacy of law as a guarantor of stability and respect for our institutions. We should like therefore to affirm here that democracy, in its universal avocation, is a secure path for the transition of societies that have reached a certain stage in their evolution.

In my prefatory words I stressed the role played by our Organization towards its rehabilitation. I note that some of the subjects on the agenda of this session of our Assembly point precisely to this trend. The profound changes that took place in international life through the consolidation of the climate of détente led to the beginnings of genuine peace perspectives and the settlement of some regional conflicts.

We must note here that the forces that led to the reunification of some parts in the world that had previously been divided are based, not only on the universal need for the self-determination of peoples, but also, and above all, on these same changes.

The decision of the two Yemens to merge into a single State, the imminent reunification of the two Germanys, and the high-level talks recently undertaken between the two Koreas testify to the genuine capacity of the peoples we represent here to contribute peacefully to the course of history.

We are however far from being secure from all sorts of tensions because many problems still remain with us.

If we consider the situation now obtaining in Africa, it is regrettable indeed that the history of that continent will have meted out a particularly painful fate to some of its peoples. The continued unjustified practice of apartheid has given

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rise to mass movements of peoples and is indeed the main cause of the phenomenon of refugees in southern Africa. We should see there an additional reason to address an appeal to the international community that it do everything to bring about the full implementation of relevant decisions adopted by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). We should also support initiatives within and outside South Africa to achieve as soon as possible the dismantling of that odious system of apartheid. In this spirit Gabon welcomes the liberation of Nelson Mandela and the legalization of anti-apartheid movements, but we note with regret the paltry nature of the measures supposedly leading to the elimination of apartheid.

Gabon is therefore in favour of maintaining sanctions against South Africa.

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But the fate of these African populations is not predicated only upon apartheid; internal and border conflicts are also causes of the same problems. In themselves, border conflicts, because they involve sovereignty, raise the problem of their settlement within the machinery advocated by the United Nations or the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

In the specific case of the Chad-Libyan border conflict, my country, which presides over the Ad Hoc Committee set up by the OAU, took an active part, in the past year, in the process of implementing the agreement concluded in Algiers on 31 August 1989. Thus we have observed carefully the functioning of the Joint Technical Commission provided for by that agreement. Indeed, we organized, in Gabon last March, a tripartite meeting at the ministerial level, during which we proposed to the parties to the conflict a draft protocol for the implementation of the Algiers agreement. This proposal was partially agreed to by both parties, which undertook to continue negotiations on some outstanding points.

Now that this Organization, through the International Court of Justice, is seized of that problem, we should like to express our appreciation to the other States that have contributed to the quest for a political solution to the dispute, as well as our conviction that we have done everything possible in that direction.

Unfortunately, the crisis in the Middle East, which continues because of the increasing lack of understanding, has just experienced another episode, which adds to the complexity of the debate on this region and thus weakens the efforts being made in the search for appropriate solutions.

As to the classic aspects of this debate - that is to say, Lebanon and Palestine - Gabon advocates resort to machinery whose creation and setting up, on the basis of relevant United Nations provisions, would make possible comprehensive

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solutions to these questions. In particular, the proposal to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East, with the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), should be implemented as soon as possible.

The gravity of recent events in the area - since the entry of Iraqi troops into the territory of Kuwait - is a matter of concern to us all. In considering the situation thus created we must mobilize all the political and diplomatic means at the disposal of the international community, in keeping with the relevant resolutions of our Organization.

There have recently been significant developments in the situation in Cambodia. We welcome, among other things, the agreement expressed by the parties to the conflict on the framework, proposed by the five permanent members of the Security Council, for a comprehensive and lasting political settlement of that conflict.

The changes that have taken place in East-West relations, which formerly were based on the balance of terror, should, logically, result in radical changes in the political role allotted to nuclear weapons. Indeed, since 1988 the main owners of nuclear weapons have agreed on the principle of reduction, and they may conclude an agreement on the means by the end of this year. These changes and the continuation of such efforts should lead to a climate favourable to a new balance based on dialogue, trust and respect for mutual interests. Only in this way will future international relations, whether political or economic, become more secure and more stable.

It was entirely appropriate that the General Assembly devoted its eighteenth special session to international economic co-operation and development. The Assembly's conclusions on the situation of the world economy in the 1980s, the prospects for improving that situation, and the commitments that were made by the Assembly make possible a positive view of that event.

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The renewed assumption by the United Nations of a role in respect of the problems relating to the North-South dialogue, if it is characterized by a global approach, should result in new hope. The advantages of such an approach are obvious. Applied to the thorny question of the treatment of debt, for example, it would avoid priority being given to economic aspects over social aspects, or to political aspects over moral aspects.

As was said by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa in his last report, external constraints are an essential element of the economic standstill in Africa. Indeed, in addition to an ever-worsening balance of trade from year to year, there is an ever-heavier burden of debt, amounting, for the African countries alone, to about $260 billion - that is to say, one fifth of the total debt of developing countries. Our countries have adopted programmes of structural adjustment, and have participated in agreements for the rescheduling of debt. On this basis, they have taken, individually, measures to improve their finances and their budget procedures, and have done so despite negative consequences at the social level - consequences that might become less dire if creditor countries were to lessen the debt burden.

In this respect, Gabon - a country of medium-range income - welcomes the reduction in the rate of interest on the public debt unilaterally decided upon by France. This initiative is proof of the role of international solidarity in the handling of economic difficulties. We renew the appeal repeatedly made by the Group of 77 for the debt of developing countries to be cancelled.

During the last two years the world economy has, it is true, grown more rapidly than was expected, but balance has not been achieved in the global development of economic relations between industrialized and developing countries. In the case of Africa in particular, there remain reasons for deep concern for the

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future of the continent. Standards of living in general have deteriorated for the fourth consecutive year because of lower commodity prices and because of Africa's small role in international trade. To confront this imbalance, which is endemic, the models of development in our countries must be restudied. How can we stop playing the simple role of producer of commodities, to which we are restricted? How can we ensure equilibrium in the balance of payments and the renewal of export income? But it would be illusory to review the models of development adopted by our countries if we did not acquire financial resources, if we did not learn more about trade in commodities and improve the role of our countries in world trade. That is why we believe it is urgent that there be agreement on an equitable and final solution to the problem of debt, an increase in the resources allotted to development, co-ordination of national macro-economic policies, and promotion of a system of international negotiation.

If current international political and economic issues are matters for concern, so are questions relating to the environment and population. As to the environment, the objective is to make public opinion in our respective countries aware of the dangers threatening the security of all of us - anarchical deforestation, soil erosion, water and atmospheric pollution, depletion of the ozone layer, illicit traffic in toxic waste, and so on. These fundamental problems could be debated at the conference on the environment to be held in Brazil in 1992.

The question of the future of world population is at the forefront of the concerns of our Organization. The operation launched a few years ago by the United Nations Population Fund bears witness to that fact.

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If I were to sum up my comments so far, I would say that our Organization's rehabilitation is going hand-in-hand with a genuine touch of humanization in its consideration of the major issues. This must surely be a sign of the times; a reflection as it is of the diversity and the financial strength of its Members, the United Nations holds within itself all the trump cards it needs for its revitalization. This is a general rule, in fact a universal law in the progress and future of any organ. Each Member State must naturally, therefore, do its utmost to help the United Nations achieve its revitalization.

This comes down to saying just how essential is the issue of what resources to grant the Organization. The United Nations cannot escape the burdens of all kinds which weigh on the progress of mankind towards a better world. Nevertheless, we must on each occasion deal with those burdens by trying to be imaginative enough to cope with them, and in doing so we would not be the first to travel the road: the generations that came before us were faced with the same challenge. However, better armed than they as we are, we should enter into the next millenium, which is almost upon us, with confidence and determination.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.